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Radio & TV

by Joan Irwin

Even Toronto looks good in TV tale of two cities

What a lively, revealing couple of hours we had when CBC Montreal and Toronto integrated their early evening news-current affairs programs 'The City At Six' and '24 Hours.'

Telephone response from audiences in both cities to the Monday night show was largely positive, in many cases highly favorable with callers saying they'd like such a show every night or at least once a week. Among the negative reactions, several came from Montrealers who thought the show favored Toronto and from Torontonians who thought it favored Montreal.

In my view the integrated program was an unqualified success — a triumph for CBMT director Desmond Smith who originated the idea and for everyone here and in Toronto who worked for months on the planning and production.

It was fascinating to see how the differences between the two cities and their people came through as much in attitudes and style as in the excellent comparative reports prepared by the staff of both shows.

The hard-driving brashness of Toronto and the more easy-going approach of Montrealers were epitomized in the delivery of the weathermen and sportscasters of each show. And though it's only fair to note that the Montrealers in the Carrefour Bar had a considerable advantage in ambiance over the Torontonians in their studio-café, the contrasting jauntiness and earnestness were clearly apparent.

Each city came across with its own brand of vibrance and variety, not in a competitive way but through an open sharing of mutual interests and activities. Both the live and taped segments of the show were exceedingly well done, with lots of location shooting in both cities contributing visual flavor and texture.

CBMT's next venture of this kind is likely to link Montreal and either Winnipeg or Vancouver. It won't happen before autumn, though, because the preparations require a great deal of time.

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CBC-TV's current affairs series 'the fifth estate' moves to Wednesdays tonight and next week for the final programs of the season, both beginning at 10 p.m.

The series, which has achieved an impressively high standard of both style and content this year, tackles a tricky topic in its seasonal finale next week — a program on the French and English media in Montreal and the differences in their treatment of news.

"What we're attempting," says 'fifth estate' senior producer and former Toronto journalist Ron Haggart, "is to find out how the French and English media in Montreal report each other to each other, and how both report the rest of Canada to the public.

"It's a very specialized and intricate job to prepare this program. The analysis has to be presented in statistical form to a great extent, and we haven't yet decided whether we can sustain a high level of interest among non-specialized viewers for a full hour."

Whether the study occupies all or only part of next week's program, it may not be as complete as 'the fifth estate' would like. The problem is that the CTV network has so far declined to provide audio tapes or program logs of its national newscasts for the three week period in late January and early February on which the study will focus.

Haggart reports that all records have been made available by the other organizations approached, including TéléMetropole, 'The Gazette', 'The Montreal Star', 'La Presse', 'Le Devoir', 'Montréal Matin', and of course both CBC French and English news departments.

"In all fairness to CTV," he says, "it's an unusual request. I'm not surprised that they want to make sure it's bona fide."

In addition to comparisons of the selection and treatment of stories by the various media, next week's program will include an examination of the Canadian Press wire service and interviews with news editors.

'The fifth estate' has produced some fine investigative journalism this season, some of which has caused vivid reaction in high places as well as providing the public with unusually absorbing viewing. There may be another one coming up tonight in a segment on political kickbacks in New Brunswick.

Tonight's show will also include a visit with the Montreal singer-song writing McGarrigle sisters, Kate and Anna, whose concert and recording career seems well on the way to international success.

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Gordon Atkinson returns to 'The City At Six' tonight with the first in a series of people-and-place items to be seen every couple of weeks for the duration of the season. Tonight's topic is the lost and lamented Van Horne mansion.

SOPHIA LOREN
Acted 'like a lioness'

FIRE DRIVES LOREN, SONS TO ROOFTOP

PARIS — (UPI) — Italian film star Sophia Loren, awakened by an early morning fire, smashed her way through a window yesterday and carried her two children to the roof where she held them against the cold night air "like a lioness."

Barefoot and clad only in a nightgown, Loren huddled with her children and neighbors for more than two hours on the roof of her elegant duplex penthouse before they were rescued by Paris firemen.

No one was injured in the fire, apparently caused by a short circuit in a downstairs floor apartment.

"At first Sophia seemed scared," said one of the neighbors. "She held her children like a lioness. But gradually everybody relaxed, her nurse took over and the kids took it as a lot of fun."

The firemen carried the two boys, Carlo Ponti Jr., 8, and Edoardo, 4, down 10 flights of the service stairway while Loren descended unaided, a member of the household said. The main stairway was blocked by smoke.

Earlier awakened by the smoke, Loren grabbed her sleeping sons and, accompanied by her secretary and nursemaid, headed for the roof.

When a window barred their way, she smashed through the glass, the household member said.

They banned saccharin but not Liberace

By JUAN RODRIGUEZ
of The Gazette

Liberace is such an ingratiating performer he's almost obnoxious. His lavishness and willingness to pamper his audience — with his wardrobe, pussycat patter and his velvet touch at the piano — are legend in showbusiness. No one has been able to make such talents last so long.

He was his same smiling self last night at Salle Wilfrid Pelletier, opening an engagement that runs through Sunday.

He titillated the audience with sly sexual double entendres and played the same game at the piano.

Liberace is a master at the art of the banal, and he's so good at it that he makes you forget that what he is doing is banal. He has a good time doing it — so what if he coats the classics with syrup? He does the same to pop tunes.

The showman's familiar candelabra still adorns his piano, this time taking an orange neon hue. The candelabra is but an ironic mantle for Liberace's scintillating wardrobe. He literally sparkles.

At one point in the show he walked out in a sequinned suit (demure sequins, mind you) cloaked by a mink cape with rhinestone lining. "The buttons are diamonds," he explained. "But I couldn't walk out wearing just buttons."

Liberace does nothing for the state of the art of piano playing, but he keeps his showbusiness tradition alive. He is, to just about anyone, entertaining.

It helps if you like sugary fillets of Strauss or hit parade pap like "Feelings."

Liberace plunges stylishly into his material: He doesn't mind being gaudy in his approach. What makes him succeed, no matter now much one disagrees with his music, is his technique. Liberace is, inevitably, a very good piano player.

That he plays schlock is part of his master plan. Put it this way: Liberace wouldn't be Liberace if he wasn't playing schlock. No one does it more masterfully, though.

He can introduce acrobats, like the Carsony team, or protegés, like Vince Cardell ("He's dying to get at my cape"), with the same weird sense of humor as he introduces his favorite classical composers or hit parade numbers. Long live Liberace!

LIBERACE
He's a master of the banal

Is the Olympic site ready for Pink Floyd and its pig?

For thousands of Quebecois rock fans, going to a concert by Pink Floyd is akin to going to Mecca. They'll get their biggest chance yet at the Olympic Stadium on July 6.

Although there is no local confirmation on what may well turn out to be the biggest rock concert in Canadian history, the British rock group's advertisement in the music trade press clearly indicates that its only Canadian date on its new world tour is the Olympic rendez-vous.

According to promoter Donald K. Donald, nothing is signed, sealed or delivered, and he expressed surprise over the Pink Floyd announcement.

"As far as I know, the group and the Olympic stadium people are still in negotiations ... although we may have an official announcement next week."

The cosmic-heavy rock group is revered in Quebec, and on this trip fans will see Pink Floyd's huge helium inflated pig — the same one that floats above British slums on the cover of the group's latest album, 'Animals,' and the same one which almost sparked an international incident.

Pink Floyd was testing its equipment at a concert in London last month when the helium pig broke away from its moorings and drifted away ... over the English channel, to hover above a small French airport. By the time indignant authorities had lodged the proper complaints, the wind changed direction, causing the helium pig to return to England. By some cosmic stroke of nature, it landed a mile from the concert site.

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Spotlight

by Juan Rodriguez

Quebec rock superstar Robert Charlebois is vacationing in Aalifornia, as he readies for the release of a new album, 'Live de Paris'. He will spend the summer giving shows in the casinos of France.

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Juno Award winner André Gagnon recently represented Canada at the spring music festival presented at the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington. The theme was a salute to the American hemisphere, and U.S. President Jimmy Carter and family attended. Gagnon's hit disc, 'Wow', made its way onto hit parade charts in northeastern U.S. as well as South America.

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There's a new jazz outfit in town, J.J. Jazz Productions, that wants to present regular shows at Plateau Hall. The first two concerts are: Buddy De Franco (May 6) and Sonny Rollins & Nucleus (May 14).

There is also a strong possibility that a jazz supergroup will appear here this summer. The group is a one-time shot consisting of Herbie Hancock, Freddie Hubbard, Ron Carter, Tony Williams and Wayne Shorter. All are stars in the their own right and, with the exception of Hubbard, played together in Miles Davis' legendary mid-1960s band.

Montrealer elected head of private broadcast group

WINNIPEG — (CP) — Montrealer Ed Prevost of the Radiomutuel radio network was elected chairman of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) last night.

Prevost was appointed head of the Montreal-based private radio network in 1973. The network's stations are all located in Quebec.

Elected vice-chairman of the group for radio was Don Lawrie of the Kawartha-Frontenac Broadcasting Co. Ltd. of Toronto, and elected vice-chairman for television was Don Smith of CHAN-TV, Vancouver.

All three were elected for one-year terms at the private broadcaster group's annual meeting.

The association also presented awards to member stations for achievemdnts as diverse as a documentary on Western weather and an auction for a symphony.

The weather programs were produced by Saskatoon station CFQC-TV and won it the station of the year award for originality in presenting material vital to Prairie agriculture.

The FM radio station of the year award went to Toronto's CKFM for a 'Dream Acution' it organized to raise money for the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

The broadcasters awarded a scholarship to Montrealer Michel Trottier, who is styudying at Ottawa St. Paul University and the University of Ottawa.

Computer shows it's got brains by pursuing Julie Christie

By DANE LANKEN
of The Gazette

Science-fiction as subject matter is an old standby for movie makers; rape is a currently fashionable theme.

Credit the people who made 'Demon Seed' (at the Palace and Dorval) with devising a means to combine these two favorites. Here we have Julie Christie violated by a robot controlled by an ultrasophisticated man-made brain.

It's an absurd story, really, but a movie made interesting and even involving by the construction of both the movie sets and the movie itself. And by an earnest performance by Christie.

It's not a funny movie — it isn't even pleasant. But it holds your attention.

Christie is, of course, the innocent victim of the attack. Her husband (played by Fritz Weaver) is a scientist who puts pursuit of knowledge above human values, and you know that means trouble. He creates a giant brain that's quicker, mightier and knows more than any half dozen humans, but just like HAL in '2001,' it soon develops a mind of its own.

First it won't cooperate on an anti-environmental deepsea mining operation, and then it gets the urge to reproduce. Julie Christie soon appears.

The scene itself is handled "tastefully," and made credible by the real-life look of the hardware. The film's promotion people point out that the computers are, in fact, real, as is the robot. And the whole mess was strung together by production designer Edward Carfagno, who won an Oscar for doing the same for 'Ben-Hur.'

'Demon Seed' was directed by Donald Cammell, who wrote and co-directed (with Nicholas Roeg) 'Performance.' His style of fast cuts and lots of close-ups works well here, too, and contributes to the movie's tension.

JULIE CHRISTIE
Input was romantic

Also interesting is the liberal use of light show-like visuals, their employment as a representation of the giant brain's consciousness giving a new twist to the West Coast light show-Expo '67-'2001' tradition.

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Lily Tomlin and Art Carney both deliver unusually good performances in 'The Late Show' (at the Loew's), a murder mystery that pays sincere homage to the genre as it was perfected in the '40s.

Tomlin plays a spaced-out would-be actress who comes to Carney, an aging private eye plagued by ulcers, to report a missing cat. Before the feline is recovered, bodies turn up on front lawns and in living rooms, in rooming houses and refrigerators.

You're never sure who's doing what to whom, but the characters are always memorable. There's the villainous fence whose Hollywood mansion is piled high with stereos and men's suits, his ever-threatening thug, the petty hood (Bill Macy — Maude's husband) always trying to land on his feet, Carney as the tired old man set on making good on one last case, and Tomlin, scatter-brained but endlessly charming, pouting, cajoling, alternately confused and determined, and in one extraordinary scene, giving a long speech in which she flows mercurially from the laughter to the verge of tears.

Newcomer Robert Benton wrote and directed 'The Late Show' (under veteran Robert Altman's production banner). He blessed the movie with many strengths, not the least of which is a happy ending.

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The Cote St. Luc Cinema is currently showing an Argentinian drama entitled 'The Jewish Gauchos,' which is about a group of Russian Jews who emigrated to South America in the 1890s and traded old world peddling skills for new lives as cowboys.

The movie is rather disappointing, because it misses almost completely on the drama in such a migration, and fills its 90 minutes instead with 'Fiddler on the Roof' type party scenes and unconscionable over-acting.

Technically the film is good, however, and if you can get past the cliches, there's the makings of a decent film beneath it all.

Incidentally, 'The Jewish Gauchos' is preceded by 'The Street,' the National Film Board's extraordinary animated short based on the Mordecai Richler story, and that's worth a trip to the theatre anytime.

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